Shahi Community

An Important Link in Nepal's Newa Civilization

Introduction:

The Shahi community is an important part of Nepal's Newa civilization, primarily centered in the Kathmandu Valley. This community uses surnames such as Shahi, Khadgi, Singh, Simha, Prakash, and others.

Etymology:

The Shahi community entered the Kathmandu Valley as warriors of King Harisingh Dev, who came seeking refuge after Muslim invaders attacked their kingdom of 'Tirhut'.

King Harisingh Dev was the brother-in-law of King Rudra Malla, the ruler of the then Nepal kingdom. King Harisingh Dev's son married King Rudra Malla's daughter, who was his sole heir, and became the king of Nepal.

The Shahi community considers themselves descendants of the royal (Shahi) family of King Harisingh Dev and has adopted the surname "Shahi," which signifies royal lineage.

History:

The Shahi community is also descended from the Mahispal (Abhira) dynasty. According to the 'Gopalaraj Vamshavali', the Mahispal dynasty was the second ruling dynasty in Nepal. The Mahispal dynasty ruled Nepal after the Gopal dynasty and before the Kirat dynasty. In Sanskrit, 'Mahispal' translates to a buffalo-herding community. The Mahispals brought the tradition of buffalo husbandry to Nepal from South India, where the warm and humid climate was considered suitable for buffalo rearing.

Later, during the Malla period, the Shahi community entered Nepal as warriors alongside King Harisingh Dev. King Harisingh Dev brought his lineage deity, "Taleju Bhawani," with him, whom they installed at the Taleju Bhawani Temple located in Bhaktapur, the capital of the then Nepal

kingdom. The ancestors of the Karnat King Harisingh Dev had originally brought Taleju Bhawani from Karnataka to Simroungadh (the capital of Tirhut).

King Harisingh Dev's son married King Rudra Malla's daughter, his sole heir, and became the king of Nepal. After the Malla kings divided the Kingdom of Nepal into three distinct states—Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur—temples of Taleju Bhawani were established in all three kingdoms. The Malla kings and later the Shah kings also worshiped her as their lineage deity.

To this day, the Shahi community continues to worship Taleju Bhawani as their lineage deity. The Shahi community considers themselves descendants of King Harisingh Dev's royal family and has adopted the surname "Shahi," which means royal. This community has also adopted the surnames "Simha" and "Sing," derived from the names of the Mahispal and Karnat kings of Nepal. Some have also taken the surname "Prakash," inspired by the famous singer of this community from that era, Ratna Das Prakash. Additionally, the community uses the surname "Khadgi." 'Khadgi' means a warrior who wields a sword (*khadga*). They entered Kathmandu as warriors of King Harisingh Dev, seeking refuge in the Kathmandu Valley after Muslim invaders attacked their kingdom of 'Tirhut'.